

Roll Call - April 20, 2009

By Representative Harry Teague

I am fortunate to be from a state that is blessed with an abundance of the natural resources that are the foundation for a comprehensive plan to move our nation toward energy independence.

New Mexico is on the forefront of our nation's energy future. We have it all — solar, wind, geothermal and biofuel production, as well as the oil and natural gas resources that have powered our state's economy for decades.

When I was 17 years old, my father got sick and I went to work in the oil fields of Southern New Mexico, making \$1.50 an hour on a pulling unit, to help support the family. Over the years, I did just about every job there was to do in New Mexico's oil and gas fields, and I am as proud of the work I did in the fields as I am of the jobs I created when I eventually started my own oil field servicing company.

When I first announced my campaign for Congress, people who knew me as an oilman were surprised to see me campaigning on a platform that emphasized energy independence through a focus on the development of clean and renewable energy. I told people across New Mexico that technologies like wind, solar and biofuels were not only good for the environment, but were also good for job creation and for our national security.

After being sworn into the 111th Congress, the very first bill I introduced, H.R. 451, provided a multiyear extension of the Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit. I worked hard to have that legislation included in the House version of the stimulus package, and when President Barack Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law on Feb. 17, the production credit was included.

I also passed an amendment to H.R. 1262, the Water Quality Investment Act, that allows

wastewater utilities to use resources from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to implement renewable energy production and energy efficiency measures in their plants. The amendment will ultimately reduce the amount of energy consumed by wastewater plants, create green jobs and save money for ratepayers.

Moving forward, my legislative agenda will focus on expanding the utilization of our abundant resources — the sun, the wind and the ingenuity of Americans who want to start a business, produce energy and create jobs. Among the issues my legislative proposals will address are:

- Expanding transmission. We have to be able to move the energy from where the wind is blowing and the sun is shining to where the demand is. The federal government must continue to invest and work with states to site transmission lines, expand transmission and get our energy to market.
- Improving the Renewable Energy Production Tax Credit. Some folks who want to start renewable projects are currently not able to take advantage of this production tax credit. For example, in my district we have nonprofit electric co-ops and Indian tribes that are tax exempt and therefore cannot utilize the credit. We need federal policy to turn tax credits into capital so that these groups can begin producing energy and creating jobs.
- Promoting energy entrepreneurship. More Americans can be energy producers by putting windmills in their backyards, solar panels on their roofs or by turning their dairy farms into energy producers. I believe we should make it so that Americans willing to help create this energy can also supplement their income doing it.
- Green job training. Americans need to be prepared with the skills necessary to participate in the coming green jobs revolution. Our community colleges and universities are the pipeline for training and talent the green energy industry will need to succeed.

Expanding the development and utilization of renewable energy is key to our nation's pursuit of energy independence. However, we cannot afford to leave American oil and natural gas companies out of the energy equation.

In order to achieve the energy independence that we all want and that America needs, we have to include American oil and gas producers in the solution. We can do that by protecting common-sense tax policies — like the expensing for intangible drilling costs, percentage depletion for oil and gas, and the marginal well tax credit — that promote domestic production. These provisions primarily benefit smaller producers, create jobs and lead directly to American energy production. Raising taxes on oil and gas producers and enacting policies that make it harder for them to produce will not get us any closer to creating a new energy economy that will keep America strong and safe.

Solving our nation's energy problems requires that everyone involved in the debate come to the table with an open mind and a willingness to make some tough but necessary choices. I spent 42 years in the oil and gas industry, but I still believe that expanding renewable energy production and utilization is the only way to overcome our nation's long-term energy challenges. As an oilman and a proponent of renewable energy, I look forward to working with all producers of American energy to set the course for our energy independence.